

Jewish Education In Palestine Under Turkey

as reflected in the She'elot u-Teshuvot of the period

A chapter from the author's

"INSIDE JEWISH PALESTINE"

in two volumes

(1519—1919)

by

DR. ISRAEL ELFENBEIN

New York

Jewish Education In Palestine Under Turkey

JEWISH EDUCATION IN PALESTINE UNDER TURKEY

as reflected in the SHE'ELOT u-TESHUVOT of the period

(A chapter from the author's "INSIDE JEWISH PALESTINE")
IN TWO VOLUMES

(1519-1919)

— by —

Dr. Israel Elfenbein, New York

The Responsa literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries throws some light on the life of the Jewish student in general and on the status of private instruction and school education in particular.

Private Education In Palestine A Mooted Problem

We mention private training advisedly in order to counteract the impression we get from other sources[1] that "the only profession for which there was not any room in Palestine was that of a private tutor". Indeed we have sufficient evidence to prove that there were special private teachers in the smaller communities and in the larger cities of Safed and Jerusalem and Hebron. These tutors provided instruction in their own homes[2] or in the homes of the children's parents[3].

We find, for instance, that in 1523 two blind teachers[4], Joseph Midrash and Moses Sephardi, received the tuition fee of three Markete per week from each individual pupil and gave free instruction to the poor children in Bible, Halakah and Codes. The regular school teachers[5], on the other hand, received their remuneration from the Halukah subsidy and the communal charity fund. In upper Galilee, including Safed, we find special private teachers, who taught "the prayers and blessings to the women and beginners"[6].

1) Vidas, Reshit Hokmah, s.v. Gidul Bonim; Shivchai Yerusholayim, 11a; Shlomel, 13b; Hama'amar III, 297-98; Schechter, Studies, II, 231—Safed in the 16th century—a city of legists and mystics—(referred to below as Sch.).
2) Shivchai Yerusholayim 14b.
3) Hagiz, Zeror ha-Hayyim, X, 23.
4) Jerusalem, III, 98.
5) Malki, 29; Jerusalem, V, 70-88.
6) Horodetzky, Cordovero, 15; Sch. 298, note 17;242, note 98.

The Standard Of The Teacher For Beginners

These teachers for beginners possessed the qualifications for integrity, piety and efficiency, as well as a general knowledge of the Bible, the commentaries and the elements of Agadah.

They enjoyed the privilege of tax-exemption. This resulted from a legal decision, rendered by ZAHALON[7] and his Safed court to the effect that: "as long as the teachers were engaged in spreading the knowledge of the Torah . . . and were pious and honest and efficient in their profession . . . (while they may not necessarily have been classified amongst the sages and scholars, who were well versed in Talmud and Halakah) . . . they were fully entitled to the privileges enjoyed by the scholars. And the communal officials could not tax them. . . . "

The Itinerant Teacher Performing The Functions Of Mohel And Religious Guide

In the smaller communities[8] of Palestine, with their limited field for the teaching profession, the private tutors had to include several neighboring communities in their itinerary. These itinerant teachers functioned in the villages and hamlets of Galilee and Judea in a double capacity. They served as instructors of the children as well as spiritual guides for the entire Jewish household. They circumcised the male children, warned the women regarding the observance of Jewish Law[9] and, whereever necessary, interpreted[10] the cardinal principle of the unity of God for the benefit of all the members of the family.

The case of Jacob G'vili[11] of Safed in the year 1620 may serve as an example of this class of teachers in Upper Galilee.

There were times when teaching was the ONLY feasible form of instruction, not only for the villagers, but for the city-dwellers of

7) no. 75.
8) cf. note 6.
9) Conforte, Kore ha-Dorot, ad loc.; Ben Z'vi, Kefar P'keyin, pp. 15-16.
10) cf. note 3.
11) cp. note 9.

Safed, Hebron and Jerusalem as well, while they were forced to migrate to the neighboring villages during the intervening periods of plague, famine and drought. These forced wanderings from one village to another occurred frequently during the sixteenth century and practically brought to a standstill the normal development of school life in the cities.

Generally speaking, women and bachelors[12] did not take up the profession of private teaching in Palestine. There were however some exceptions, which prove the general rule.

Ashkenazi[13], for instance, records the case of a bachelor, named Reuben ben Jacob, who met with great success in the profession of private teaching in an unnamed community.

Again in Hebron in the year of 1654 the Karaite traveller, Moses Yerushalmi[14], found one woman instructing an elementary class of children.

On the basis of the foregoing illustrations, recorded in the literature of the period, we may safely state that the profession of the private teacher was an important factor in the development of Jewish education in Palestine under the Turkish regime.

Solitary Study Not Favored By Safed Schools

While education under a private tutor was definitely practiced in the Holy Land, study in solitude however, was discountenanced by the leading scholars. It was considered conducive to brooding and served as a handicap to clear thinking.

Thus we find ZAHALON[15], for example, rebuking his former pupil De Boton in no uncertain terms: How appropriate are the words of the sages[16] 'either companionship or death' . . . You have been studying ALL ALONE for some time, notwithstanding the fact that there were enough colleagues over here for you to join up with . . .

12) cp. the accepted tradition cited by Vidas, p. 124d.
13) no. 38.
14) Ginzai Yisroel of St. Petersburg, p. 39; omitted by Asaf, Sefer ha-shanah I, pp. 42-57; L'Toledot ha-Chinuch I, pp. 211,223.
15) no. 271.
16) Taanit, 23a.

Verily, I am greatly grieved over the *loss of your usual clarity of thought,* which you have now replaced by solitary brooding.

Group study and collective instruction were greatly encouraged in Jerusalem and Safed during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Elijah Ferrara[17], for example, performed three functions daily in the Holy City. In the morning, immediately after the services in the synagogue, he taught a chapter of Maimonide's Code; in the afternoon Gemara with Tosafot and Posekim; and in the evening Talmud with Rashi commentary.

The Time For Group Study

Those inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were not engaged in handicraft and commerce, remained in the synagogue at the end of the morning and evening services to listen to the lecture of the Darshan[18] for fifteen minutes.

They then proceeded to the Bet ha-Medrash, where they studied Mishna and Gemara for a period of six hours daily[19].

In Safed the method of procedure during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was somewhat different:

The people gathered daily in the synagogue in five or six groups and sat at the feet of their masters. The courses of study, pursued by each group, varied. Some studied the Pentateuch and the Scriptures regularly. Others engaged in either one of the following subjects: Mishnah with the commentary; Halakah with Rashi and Tosafot; Maimonide's Code; Ain Yaakob or the Zohar.

No one left the synagogue, either mornings for work or evenings for home, without receiving his regular instruction in the Torah[20].

Friday afternoons, Sabbaths, Festivals, especially Pentecost and

17) cf. Ham'amar, III,78; Jerusalem, II, 14. Bertinoro too stated in 1489; "I rejoice in my work . . . Here we gather mornings and evenings for the study of Halakhah (cf. Ham. III, 150")

18) e.g. Hakam Zechariah Sephardi in 1495 (Jerus. III, 2; Ham. III, 165).

19) According to a second version, *only three hours daily.*

20) Shlomel 3b; Ham. III, 291. In the 17th century Jerusalem had three separate societies, such as Chevrah Tehilim, Chevrah Mishnayot, and Chevrah Shas.
— These had a permanent Gabbai and studied daily in memory of the dead (cf. Hagiz, M. Hakamim, pp. 175-8).

Tabernacles, and all the long nights — beginning with midnight-vigil — were designated[21] as periods, which were most propitious for a profound study in the secret lore.

In Jaffa[22] *alone,* we are told, most of the men turned to commercial pursuits. The number of those who engaged in the study of Torah was rather very limited and only very few frequented the schools regularly.

The Early Instruction of Children

To the Jew education is not limited to any particular age in the life of man. It is coextensive with life in all its stages. As soon as the Palestinian lad began to speak, the father taught him to recite the morning prayer from Deuteronomy, chapter XXXIII, verse 4, and the first verse of the Shema, gradually adding several verses for oral instruction. When the child reached the age of three, the father began to teach him the Hebrew alphabet.

It was the prevailing custom[23] in the land to bring the lad to school, at an early age of two or three years, where he received his training in the Hebrew letters and vowels. There were others however, who did not bring the child to school until he was five years old[24]. Between the ages of six and seven[25] he was taught the Pentateuch, the Prophets and Hagiographa. Trani[26] singled out an individual child who at the early age of five already knew one section of the weekly portion of the Pentateuch. The fundamentals of Hebrew grammar were also taught between the ages of six and seven. Zahalon[27] thus states: Verily, I remember, when I was a youngster either six or seven years old, my teachers taught me the grammatical principles of dagesh forte and lene.

21) Cordovero, Or Naarav, II, chapter 1; Horod. 315.
22) cp. Yitzhaki, Zera Abraham, I, nos. 13-17; Jerusalem, II, 9.
and Hagiz, l. c/19d, and their descriptions of the general status of education amo the masses in Jerusalem and Turkey respectively.
23) Vidas, Reshit Hekmah, l. c/.
24) Moses b. Makir, Seder Ha-Yom, cited by Asaf, S. Hashanah, I, 52.
25) Hagiz, l. c/9a.
26) no. 165
27) no. 232.

The child received daily instruction from his parents or teachers (until he reached the age of Bar Mitzvah) in the following subjects: Bible with the commentary of Rashi, Midrash, Agada and the Laws, which were needed for every day guidance in the service and the fear of God. Instruction in the Mishnah (with the commentary of Bertinoro) and in Gemara (with the commentary of Rashi) began at the age of ten and was given only two or three times a week[28]. The curriculum in Galilee[29] required the period of one year for the study of each of these three Orders of the Mishnah, i.e. Moed, Nezikin, and Nashim; and only eight months time for each of the remaining three Sedarim. The study of the Mishna for both young and old was intended primarily for memory work. "Many people in the Holy Land were thus well versed in the Mishnah as we are in Psalm CXLV . . . "[30]. During the seventeenth century it was customary for some scholars in Jerusalem to encourage the oral repetition of the Mishnah by offering cash prizes with the result that there were some who succeeded in memorizing all the six orders of the Mishnah, while others learned the major parts by heart.

Generally speaking, a knowledge of Bible, Mishnah and the Commentaries, served as a "key to open up the (gates leading to the) study of Halakah". Exceptions were made in the case of the precocious child who was under private tutelage[31]. We thus learn from Israel of Peruggia[32] that, in the case of his youngest son, the ability to translate the book of Genesis up to Parashat Vayechi sufficed as a prerequisite to his initiation in the study of the Talmud.

After the age of Bar Mitzvah, the father was to determine upon the career of the son. Should he decide upon the career of merchant or craftsman, he was at least sure that his son was well versed in Bible, Midrashim, Minhagim and Dinim, which are "indispensable to one who bears the name of an Israelite". Should he choose to have his

28) Hagiz, 9a.
29) Seder Ha-Yom, 48, note 2.
30) Tbid, pp. 45, 49 and the sources quoted.
31) Like Jacob Hagiz; cf. M. Hakamim, cited by Asaf, p. 48.
32) In 1523: cf. Jerus III, 100.

son continue the advanced studies of the Torah, the latter was privileged to go through the preparatory stages, which were required of a master of the law, namely, to study Gemara regularly, until at the age of twenty he would be well versed in the Talmud, both as to its content as well as to the pilpulistic system of reasoning.

This was the curriculum[33] of study current in Upper Galilee and in Jerusalem during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

To get a fair conception of the course of study pursued by a scholar in SAFED, it will be best to let Moses Alshech[34] speak for himself:

"I never aimed at things too high or beyond[35] me . . . From my earliest days the study of the Talmud was my chief occupation . . . I attended the Yeshivah where I made myself familiar with the discussions of Abbaye and Rava . . . The nights I devoted to research and the days to the study of Halakhah . . . In the morning I read the Talmud and in the afternoon I studied the Posekim . . . On Fridays alone would I find time for the reading of the Scriptures and the Midrash in preparation for my discourse on the weekly portion of the Law. . . . "

In Jerusalem, however, the study of Talmud and Halakhah was at a low ebb in the early part of the sixteenth (prior to 1521) and in the latter part of the seventeenth centuries. The abnormal status of school instruction resulted from a deficiency of HALUKKAH—stipends for the support of the students of the Law and from the generally precarious economic condition, when the raging plague and famine forced the people to migrate from village to village.

In 1520 the Dayyan of Jerusalem, Israel of Peruggia, informs us: "There is not here (in Jerusalem) a single student, who would make a thorough study of Halakhah. . . . In Peruggia we achieved more in a single day than we do here in one month . . .[36].

33) cp. Moses Hagiz in the name of his father (Mishnat Hakamim, 9 a-b).
34) in the preface to his commentary on the Pentateuch: cf. Halakhot Ketanot no 155; compare the same with the system of study described by Jacob Hagiz in his MS. Havve Olam.
35) very likely alluding to the current studies in Cabbala.
36) cf. Jerusalem, III, pp. 98,100.

In 1521 the "sons of the Yeshivah" in Jerusalem declared that due to the herculean efforts of Isaac Sholal ha-Cohen, the former Nagid, a definite change for the better was noticeable. "Behold[37], there was no one to support the students of the Law . . . But he (the ex-Nagid) girded on his loins like a giant, contributed from his own resources towards the support of the scholars and the disciples . . . and founded new academies of learning in Jerusalem . . . These students have resumed the regular study of the Torah and are engaged in the study of the Talmud with Rashi and the French Tosafists . . . Mornings and evenings they study in groups, while in the afternoon they pursue their studies individually . . . In the morning they cover, as a rule, one to two folios of the Talmud with the commentaries of Rashi and Tosafot; while in the evening they finish one chapter of both the Mishnah and Maimonide's Code.

It was only during the latter part of the sixteenth century that the community of Jerusalem[38] could boast of having nine regular academies of learning, where Gemara, Tosafot and Posekim were the daily subjects of study: one Yeshivah of fifty men of piety, who engaged uninterruptedly in the study of Bible, Mishnah, Agada and Musar literature; and one midnight-vigil group, whose associates would indulge at midnight in the study of Loria's Cabbala.

Even the community of Safed[39], which was destined to become the center of learning during the 16th century, had in 1522 only one Yeshivah and three Synagogues. Again in 1603 it numbered 21 synagogues, 18 Yeshivot and one elementary school, which accommodated 400 pupils and a staff of 20 teachers.

Apparently, the study of Cabbala alone was the least affected by external circumstances and economic conditions. Shlomel informs us that in 1603 upon his arrival in Safed with 3½ talir in his possession, he immediately procured a copy of the Zohar at the expense of 1½ talir and willingly endured a life of penury during the whole year

37) Neubauer, Lebanon, XXVI; Hama'amar III, 199; Frumkin, 23.
38) Shivchai Yerusholayim, 1a.
39) Sch., 209 and the sources cited.

in order to obtain a knowledge of Cabbala. He was however grieved to learn that the mystics refused to reveal to him all the cabbalistic rites of the Loria school.

The Rigid Standard Of Admission To The School Of Mystics

The Safed schools of the mystics must have set a very rigid standard for admission[40]. The applicant had to be married and at least twenty[41] years of age in accordance with the requirements of the Cordovero school. While the other schools[42] required the minimum age limit of forty years.

The applicant had to divest himself of pride and the inanities of material pleasures and was not permitted to enter the INNER SANCTUARY in haste. On the other hand, he was required to approach the study of Cabbala by degrees, exhibiting deliberation and modesty, fear and love of God.

Both the master and the disciples were accustomed[43] to sit on the ground during the period of instruction, while the revelations of the secret lore were rendeed by heart. No one[44] was permitted either to utter them by mouth or to record them in writing. Even some of the leading scholars[45] of the period, who were in the habit of receiving messages from the Mentor Angel and considered themselves worthy, some day, to hold communion with the prophet Elijah, were—according to Isaac Loria—possessed of souls, which were not subtly attuned to receiving the mysteries of the Loria system of Cabbala[46]. Thus, we learn, that Loria required from his younger Associates that they be isolated from the world and that they live together with their wives

40) Horodetzky, Cordovero, pp. 26, 29, 308, 311, 315.
41) one half of the period required for the achievement of Binah (Pirke ABOT, V. 24).
42) such as the Loria school.
43) Cordovero claimed that this was done for the sake of self-discipline in humility and the fear of God.
44) The only exception made by Loria himself, was in the rare case of Chayyim Vital.
45) Such as Caro, whose soul was susceptible to the Cordovero system of Cabbala ALONE. Moses Alshech too was found unworthy as a recipient of Loria's lore
46) Shlomel, 44b; Sch. p. 265, note 130; Horodetzky, l. c. pp. 86-88.

and children in an ENCLOSURE (known as HESGAR[47]), which he had provided for them.

Cordovero[48] on the other hand required that the applicant acquaint himself with a general knowledge of the Scriptures, the Mishnah, Anatomy and Physiology, and should be well versed in the Talmud and its intricate paths of Pilpul and in the Maimonidean interpretations of the 613 Biblical precepts. He also prescribed the following sources of mystic literature to be used in the four grades of his school[49]:—

1) The Sefer Yezirah, Sefer ha-Bohir, and the Midrashim on Ruth and Lamentations.

2) The works ascribed to Simon b. Yochai, such as: Zohar, Tikkune ha-Zohar, Rayya—Mehemna, and the Midrash—Zohar on the Song of Songs.

3) The Midrash—Zohar on the Book of Esther.

4) Sefer Mav'na ha-Hokmah and the "Chapters on Creation and the Holy Chariots". Of all these works, the Zohar and the B'rit M'nuchoh were considered the most authoritative sources indispensable to the study of Cabbala.

The Method Of Study In Halakah

Halakah, unlike the study of Cabbala (which was not uttered by mouth, for its revelation was mostly of the heart), was studied aloud in group formation. To brood in solitude[50] over the study of Halakah was considered in Safed a serious handicap to clear thinking. Some scholars, like Joseph Ashkenazi[51], surnamed the Great Tanna, studied the Mishnah in a special "sing-song" intonation. This method of studying the Law became more than a form of study. It very likely developed into a kind of mystic rite, wherein the senses and the mind lost themselves in intensive study.

47) cf. Shlomel 141b; Sch. 269; and a special article by the author under the title of: "HESGAR in the school systems of the Hebrews, Mohammedans and Christians": cp. infra note 72.
48) Horod., l. c., pp. 29, 30, 315.
49) Idem.
50) Zahalon, 271.
51) Sambari, Paris Ms., f. 131a; Neubauer, p. 151.

In Safed the method employed in the study of Halakah was more practical and less sophisticated than that, which was applied in Damascus[52]. It was based upon truth and a profound study of the subject matter in contrast to that of Damascus, which was entangled in the thicket of sophistic reasoning, building castles and destroying them at the same time.

During the seventeeenth century the leading scholars[53] in Jerusalem were also opposed to the use of the extreme pilpulistic method in Halakah and expressed their unqualified disapproval in these unequivocal terms: "It is far more useful to learn a trade, such as carpentry and the like, than to waste time on Pilpul". They recommended the following threefold system for the student of Halakah: Firstly, he should acquaint himself with the hermeneutical principles of the Talmud, which may serve as a key to a profound study of the Gemara. Secondly, he should learn to comprehend the method of the Tosafist's school, the only method worthwhle, because it is based upon truth and sound logic. Thirdly, he should be versed in the intricate paths of deciding the Law for practical purposes.

Languages Used In The School

The languages used in the Palestinian schools were Hebrew and Spanish, but not Arabic and Turkish[54]. Castilian was the vernacular of the Sephardim (who were in the majority) and easily suppressed[55] all other languages. It is doubtful however, whether the Sephardim in Palestine preserved their mother tongue in its pristine form and spoke Castilian with as pure an accent as their correligionists did in Salonica during the sixteenth century. It is more likely that the Jews in Palestine used a mixture of Spanish and Hebrew, in which the former was the predominating element. In the mystic schools of Safed[56], how-

52) cf. Zahalon, no. 67, versus Dayyan Jacob Abulaffiia of Damascus.
53) i.e. Jacob and Moses Hagiz, cf. M. Hakamim, nos. 26-7; cp. also Abraham Halevi's objection to the extremists in pilpul; cf. Ginat V'radim, II, 24.
54) See infra.
55) Shlomel, pp. 13b-14a; Sch., 229.
56) Cordovero MS., published by Sch, p. 294; Also the preachers delivered their lectures on Sabbaths in Hebrew, e.g. Bertinoro of Jerusalem in 1489; cf. Ham. III, 150.

ever, Hebrew was the language used only amongst the Associates on weekdays; while — on Sabbaths and festivals, in honor of the holy-day, the holy tongue was the sole medium of conversation.

Unlike the spoken word, which was mainly Spanish, the written word was not limited to any language in particular.

In the seventeenth century, however, most of the people in Jerusalem used Arabic[57] and were guided by Arabic usage in formulating legal documents. Only in the printed word[58] Hebrew was the predominant language. In fact the Jews under the Turkish regime were forbidden[59] to print books in the official languages of the land i.e. in Turkish and Arabic.

School Textbooks In Palestine

School books were used in the original Hebrew texts, but not in translations. Some scholars[60] in Jerusalem were careful not to use copies of the Holy Writ and the Talmud even in their original Hebrew texts, if these were printed by non-Jews, who had intended them for Gentile use.

The text books used in the schools of Palestine, such as Bible, Talmud, commentaries and codes, were not products of the Safed printing house. These books were acquired by direct import from Italy[61] and by donations from individuals who had brought them along from Europe. The importation of these textbooks from the European centers of learning was limited to Italy, because of the exorbitant prices[62] demanded for these works in Eastern Europe.

57) Hagiz, Kuntras 1'Gittin, nos. 5,19. In fact Arabic or Turkish was used during our period in legal documents of marriage and divorce (cf. Alshech, 48; Zahalen, nos. 232, 127, 151, 149, 236).

58) See supra.

59) According to the account of 1651 by Niccolo Nicolai, Viaggi Nella Turchia, (Venice 1580) p. 143.

60) e.g. Jacob and Moses Hagiz, Halakot Ketanot, no. 15; cp. Caro, Bet Yoseph, Yoreh Deah, 237. The study of Hebrew texts by Gentiles was looked upon with suspicion by the Church, no less than by the Synagogue. The scholars of the 17th century must have feared the result of their Christological terminology and exposition, as applied to the Old Testament, whenever it was prepared for Gentile use.

61) except the commentaries of Zahalon, Alshech on Daniel, Samuel Arinol and Galanti (cp. introduction to Shivchai Yerusholayim, 1b-2a).

62) e.g. Gedaliah Cordovero paid the price of 500 Zechine for 100 Mishnayot with 21 commentaries and 50 copies of Maimonidean Code with Caro's commentary (cf.

We are told by Shlomel[63] in 1603 that Hebrew books were much cheaper in Safed than in Poland and Russia. For the sum of ten Talir one could obtain here a supply of books, that would have to cost fifty Talir in the above mentioned countries.

Apparently, the supply of Hebrew books in the Holy City was not in great abundance. This may probably account for the re-enforcement of an old Takkanah[64] by the Kahal of Jerusalem, which forbade the export of all sacred books from the Holy land, as well as for the provision[65] made by the individual donors that these books were never to be sold by the communal officials even in a time of economic depression.

During the 16th century a dearth in Hebrew textbooks was generally felt in the villages of Judea and upper Galilee. In abnormal times, when the city dwellers were forced to wander from one village to another on account of the plague, the scholars[66] complained that the Hebrew textbooks, such as the Talmud, the commentaries and the codes, were not within the people's reach. The only books available for daily use were parts of Maimonide's Code and the tractates Baba Kama and Baba Metzia, for the simple reason that these textbooks accompanied the Palestinian scholar on all his wanderings.

Places Of Study

Originally the communities in Palestine had no permanent places set aside for the purpose of study. The open fields and the woods were used for the study of Cabbala. While others resorted to the workshops as improvised places of study. The inhabitants of Arad[67] for example, who lived a pastoral life, were accustomed to have the disciples leave for the open fields. There they studied the Torah with their masters, while the latter were tending the flock.

Horodetzky, Cordovero, 31, note 4; to which you may add Azariah de Fano's biography by J. L. Voidislevsky, pp. 6-7, note 1).

63) pp. 13b—14a.

64) Hagiz, Halakot Ketanot, II, 187.

65) Ham'amar III, 121; Jerusalem II, 16.

66) Zahalon, nos. 141, 19, 8, 46, 51, 52, 91; his Novellae on B. Metzia, Venice 1694. pp. 11b, 12a.

67) during the 13th century and after (Jerusalem, II, 10).

The pupils in Zerifin[68] received their daily instruction in a neighbor's workshop. Again Alkabez and Cordovero[69], his brother in law, whenever they wished to pursue the profound study of Cabbala, would leave the city of Safed for the open fields or repair to the sacred graves of Simeon ben Yochai and his son Eleazar. Indeed Moses Hagiz[70] of Jerusalem recommends the use of the woods and the open fields for the study of the secret lore.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries most of the teaching took place in the synagogue, in the Bet ha-Midrash and in special places of study, called either MEDRAS (Medrasa in Arabic)[71] or HESGAR (Bet ha-Hesgar)[72]. Of these schools (HESGAROT)[73] Hebron had two, Ain Zaitun one, Jerusalem nine and Safed eighteen. The names of these schools the reader will find tabulated below at the end of the chapter.

The selection of either one of the places of study cited above, was left entirely to the discretion of the school-staff and its student body. No one, neither the donors nor the communal officials (with their arbitrary powers of legislation), could interfere in the matter and attempt to designate a definite place for school use. The leaders of the Palestinian Kahal in the sixteenth century attempted to pass an ordinance: "Not to distribute the Halukkah stipend among the students, unless they pursued their studies in the synagogue proper . . . "Trani's[73] court however declared it illegal on several grounds:" . . .

68) Jerusalem II, note 30.
69) Sefer Gerushin, pp. 17-18; cp. Shlomel pp. 3a, 4a, 12b.
70) Mishnat Hakamim, 14b.
71) the way the Moslems did in the mosque. cf. Trani, I, 14; II, 33; Ashkenazi, 14; Sambari, Paris MS., f. 113b; Hagiz, Lekat ha-Kemach, no. 287.
72) This term occurs in the Palestinian literature on numerous occasions. Suffice to mention here some of the sources: Pinto, Mibchar m'Kesef, 71; Hagiz, Halakhot Ketanoth, no. 4 et passim; Sefath Emeth, 26b; Sheber Posh'im 12b; Chemdat Yomim, 34c; Shibchai Yerusholayyim, la; Shlomel, 10b; Vital, Shibchai, 16a.
Both the origin and the connotation of this term are somewhat doubtful. It very likely implies a school, located in a separate ENCLOSURE. It is however somewhat far fetched to connect it even remotely with the Rabbinic interpretation of the Biblical phrase — החרש והמסגר — (Kings II, XXIV, 16; Jeremiah XXIX, 2). In the case of the Loria school of mystics (cp. Shlomel ibid), it may imply a block of buildings with a synagogue attached to it, where the disciples of the mystics (together with their wives and children) had their permanent quarters. According to Professor Louis Ginzberg it may refer to a segregated Jewish district in the community.
73) Trani, I, 14; II, 33, 66, 101, 169.

The Halukkah subsidy for students was not to be classified as a local fund . . . It was gathered from various international sources for the purpose of supporting all Yeshivah students alike, irrespective of the places they happened to choose for study . . . Besides the loud study in all the corners of the synagogue causes unnecessary confusion between one student body and another . . . There were here, however, some Talmudical colleges whose pupils selected the synagogue as their place of study . . . the way the Mohammedans do in the mosque. . . . "

Again, when an anonymous supporter of the Palestinian schools pledged to donate a sum of 5000 Lebanim for a period of ten years, on the condition that he would be permitted to dictate the inner management of the school (i.e. to change the quarters as well as the leadership of the academy), Trani[74] and his court decided to reject the conditional offer on the ground that the big financial supporters[75] could not legally interfere with the inner management of the Yeshivah and determine the location of its quarters.

Only the individual student was free to shift at randon from one school to another. Some communal leaders[76] even encouraged the transfer of students from one Yeshivah to another and offered the students the advantage of having a renowned scholar at the head of the new school.

Apparently, the "sons of the Yeshivah" enjoyed also the privilege of self-government[77] and had the power to exclude and re-admit a colleague at their discretion.

School Discipline And The Use Of Coroporal Punishment

In the matter of school discipline a radical change has taken place during this period. Some parents as well as the pupils in the elementary

74) Sefer ha-Shanah, I, 48, note 2.
75) Egypt, Turkey and Italy supplied several large contributors to the Palestinian schools, whose bequests ranged from 145 Perahim to such sums as 11,700 Maidos and 100,000 Lebanim (cp. Zahalon, 38).
76) Ashkenazi, 14; Trani II, 68. Note especially the case of a Hakam, who caused a disciple of an old Yeshivah promise under oath, that he would obtain a transfer to a new school for a period of one year at least.
77) e.g. the case recorded by Trani 1. c., where a student of bad reputation was barred under oath by the B'nai ha-Yeshivah and was re-admitted after one year upon the presentation of positive signs of repentance.

schools arrogated to themselves the privilege of interfering with the enforcement of disciplinary measures by the teachers.

Originally, under normal hygienic conditions, the discipline in the primary grades was very rigid. The parents of the school-children favored the use of corporal punishment by the teacher and would even reward him in the presence of the children as a sign of gratitude[78] for the use of corrective measures. Under abnormal conditions, however, when the physical resistance of the children was at a very low ebb—as a result of the frequent recurrence of famine and plague in the land—there developed in the schools of Palestine a laxity in the enforcement of discipline. The parents took the liberty of warning the teacher in the presence of the children against the use of corporal punishment. The teachers themselves generally refrained[79] from hitting the lads, because of the latter's debilitated bodily condition. Occasionally when a teacher did strike a child, his parent immediately removed the child from the school and bluntly invited the teachers to leave the school premises, in order that he might strike the teacher freely.

This want of the proper respect due a teacher of the Law as well as the general laxity in the training of the children in Jerusalem was regarded by Hagiz[80] as "the custom of evil repute and of detrimental consequences" to the normal growth of the children in the Holy City. It prompted him to seriously consider the advisability of setting up a special Bet Din to handle similar cases of misdemeanor in the schools of Jerusalem.

The Number Of Students Available In The Schools Of Palestine

These unfavorable economic conditions not only weakened the morale in the elementary schools, but also affected the general attendance in the schools of higher learning. Indeed the number of scholars, available in the schools of Safed and Jerusalem varied con-

78) Hagiz, Zeror ha-Hayyim, cited by Asaf, Sefer ha-Shanah, p. 53, note 1.
79) Samuel Benveniste, Orah Hayyim, ch. II.
80) Halakot Ketanot, 1. c.; Zeror ha-Hayyim 53.

siderably with the general population of the place and the prevailing economic conditions of the times. In 1489 Bertinoro[81] wrote: "Two Sephardim are studying regularly with me . . . " while in 1517 a vast number of students left Egypt and Upper Galilee to join the two academies in Jerusalem which were founded by Nagid Isaac Sholal Hacohen. Again in 1520 the Yeshivot of David ibn Susan and Dayyan Israel of Peruggia[82] counted in their midst only five and ten students respectively. The attendance at Caro's Talmudical college in Safed must have been exceedingly large, during the intervening period of 1535-75. Otherwise tradition[83] would not have exaggerated it to the maximum number of seven hundred students. Later in 1603 Shlomel[84] found in Safed eighteen Yeshivot and one large preliminary school, which accommodated four hundred pupils and a staff of twenty teachers. The Ashkenazim, who as a rule were not as successful as the Sephardim[85] in maintaining their own schools, could boast of only one large successful school in Jerusalem during the sixteenth century; i.e. the Yeshivah of Ephraim Fish[86], which numbered over two hundred disciples, "all of them eminent scholars". They could not however, maintain the other schools, which were founded during the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries by Yechiel of Paris and Judah ha-Hasid of Dubno[87], respectively

The list of schools, their heads, founders and contributors, which the reader will find tabulated below, will conclude our survey of Jewish education in Palestine.

81) Jerusalem, III, 100.
82) Ham'amer, III, 150, 188.
83) Sch. 237 note 86 and the sources cited.
84) p. 43a.
85) For two reasons: Firtsly, because the Sephardim were definitely in the majority during this period. Secondly, because they were exceptionally solicitous of the welfare of the scholars and of the "sons of the Yeshivot" — a fact attested by Abraham Treves Zarfati, himself an Ashkenazi — (cf. Habib, 1, 25).
86) Zahalon, 160, p. 133a. This responsum, by the way, throws great light on the unfriendly relations between the ASHKENAZIM and the SEPHARDIM in Jerusalem of the 16th century.
87) Apparently, J. D. Eisenstin (Ozar Yisroel V, 66,) confused the two Judah ha-Hasid, the one of Speyer (of the 12th c.) with the one of Dubno (of the 17 c.).

THE TABLE OF THE SCHOOLS IN PALESTINE

(during the 16th and 17th centuries)

A) SCHOOLS OF SAFED

Before 1546 (1510-1546)

Schools of the Sephardim

1) Yeshivah of Joseph SARAGOSSI (1521)
2) Yehivah of Jacob BERAB (1535-46)
3) Yeshivah of Joseph CARO (1535-75)
4) Yeshivah of Moses CORDOVERO (1522-70)
5) Yeshivah of Israel de CORIEL
6) Yeshivah of Abraham SHALOM, the Elder
7) Yeshivah of Solomon SAGIZ
8) Yeshivah of TRANI, the Elder (1535-85)

After 1546 (1546-1690)

Schools of the Sephardim

1) Two Yeshivot of Moses ALSHECH
2) Chevrat Talmud Torah of Solomon ALASHKAR
3) Yeshivah of Yom Tov ZAHALON
4) Yeshivah Elijah de VIDAS
5) Yeshivah Eleazar AZKARI
6) Yeshivah Samuel de USEDA
7) Yeshivah of TRANI, the Younger

TOTAL NUMBER OF SAFED SCHOOLS (in 1603) — *19 Schools

Before 1546

Schools of Maghrabin and Mustaarabim

1) Yeshivah of Isaac MUSTAARABI
2) Yeshivah Misod MAARABI, the Blind
3) Yeshivah of Sulaiman ibn Ahvana MAARABI

After 1546

Schools of the Ashkenazim

1) Yeshivah of Joseph ASHKENAZI
2) Yeshivah of Bezallel ASHKENAZI
3) Yeshivah of Isaac LORIA
4) Yeshivah of Simeon ASHKENAZI
5) Yeshivah of Yechiel GINZBURG and Eliezer Ginzburg

B) SCHOOLS OF JERUSALEM

Before 1546

Schools of the Sephardim

1) Two Yeshivot of Isaac SHOLAL (1517)
2) Yeshivah David ibn SUSAN
3) Yeshivah Israel of PERUGGIA (1520)
4) Yeshivah Levi ibn HABIB
5) Yeshivah Moses de CASTRO
6) Yeshivah Moses SEPHARDI
7) Yeshivah of Rabbi AARON

Schools of the Ashkenazim

1) Yeshivah of Abraham Treves ZARFATI
2) Yeshivah of Zechariah FRANK
3) Yeshivah of Zechariah ZECHSIL
4) Yeshivah of Israel ASHKENAZI
5) Yeshivah of Peretz ASHKENAZI
6) Yeshivah of Ephraim FISH (1546)

Tiberias Rebuilt (after 1546)

1) Yeshivah of Rabbi ZEMACH
2) Yeshivah of Rabbi ELEAZAR

Gaza (after 1546)

1) Yeshivah of Moses ben Joseph SEPHARDI
2) Yeshivah of MOSES OF PRAGUE

After 1546

Schools of the Sephardim

1) MEDRASH BET YAKOB
2) HESGAR YEFO'AR ANOVIM
3) HESGAR N'VAH SHALOM
4) HESED l'ABRAHAM u-BINYAN SHLOMOH
5) HESGAR KENESET YISROEL
6) HESGAR GEDULAT MORDECAI
7) HESGAR DAMESHEK ELIEZER
8) HESGAR MOGEN DAVID
9) HESGAR MEKOR BARUCH
10) HESGAR GALANTI, the Younger
11) HESGAR Raphael Mordecai MALKI
12) HESGAR HEZEKIAH de SILVA

Hebron (after 1546)

1) HESGAR EMETH l'YAAKOB
2) HESGAR KNESETH YISROEL
3) HESGAR AARON HAYYUN
4) HESGAR ABRAHAM AZULAI

Ain Zaitun (after 1546)

1) Yeshivah of Moses ben MAKIR